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A FRAGMENT OF THE "SEMITIC" PHILOSOPHY.

The distinguishing attribute of spirit is life or action. The distinguishing attribute of matter is existence or extension. Man, as an object of thought, as a phenomenon, is a dualism consisting of spirit and matter. But man in himself, as a subject, or author of action, is a unit, a spiritual unit, a spirit; being the spiritual or living element of the human dualism.

The life or action of man is that of his spirit, and in that action a dualism everywhere appears, consisting of two kinds of action, each concrete with the other; although in every act one kind is predominant. First, man's life or action is individual and social; his social action being joint with that of God, or other spirits like himself.

The individual action of man is unconscious and conscious, as well as immediate and mediate. His unconscious action is unfelt, and is, therefore, unknown or unnoticed at the time it takes place. It is only known afterwards by its effects, which are its signs, and by other circumstantial evidence. The body of man, for instance, with the sensuous ideas, are formed of matter by the spirit's unfelt, unconscious, immediate action, in order to facilitate its conscious action, and as instruments for that purpose. The proof of this fact needs only to be briefly suggested. The spirit is present as an interested agent when the body is repaired and constantly renewed, and when the ideas are made for its use; the material nature of the body is unquestioned, while the material nature of the somewhat analogous sensuous ideas appears from their want of life, and from their possession of proportionate extension, relative place, and other material attributes.

Man's conscious action is practical and speculative. Feeling, in all its varieties, including will, is only a mark of the phases of his conscious action. His practical conscious action, whether intended to affect matter only, or also spirit, is the moving and transforming of matter, and is always mediate; the body being the means or instrument which his spirit immediately employs to move other matter, and matter being the means which his spirit uses to communicate its action to other spirits.

Speculative conscious action, or thought, is immediate and mediate. Immediate speculative action, called presentative perception, or intuition, is the spirit's superficial view or knowledge of outward things in gross, or in bulk, while, and so far as, they are actually present to it. Its focus of clear and distinct knowledge is very limited.

Mediate speculative action, which may be called insight, uses the sensuous ideas with the body as its means or instruments of thought; and with them it penetrates the surface of outward things and analyzes them, collects and constructs for its deliberate scrutiny a counterpart in miniature of the whole outward world, of the distant as well as the near, of the absent as well as the present, and in the present both traces back, as its cause, the past, and forecasts, as its effect, the future. The body, viewed as an outward idea, or instrument of thought, furnishes the spirit a standard of comparison for extension, as the hand's breadth, the foot, the pace; and also for solidity, weight, and other sensible qualities of matter; and in its motion, as the immediate effect of spiritual action, it indicates spirit as the original immediate cause of all other motion. While the body furnishes a normal outward standard, the sensual or inward ideas are exact relative inward standards of comparison, being material images, infinitely small, of the outward objects which they represent, and precisely proportioned to them in size, form, relative position, color, sound, and other sensible qualities. As such the sensuous ideas are auxiliary bodies, performing an office for all reasoning analogous to the part enacted by the auxiliary magnitudes of the higher mathematics for mathematical reasoning. They are functions, and functions of functions—qualitative as well as quantitative functions; and functions of spiritual action as well as of mere matter.

Owing to the original or primordial dualism of the universe as known by man, every object of outward material nature exhibits to man's thought marks of spiritual action. The sensuous ideas themselves, with the body, as material objects, exhibit such marks. In the first place, they show marks of the action of man's own spirit, and thereby they enable the spirit, indirectly, to know itself, its own nature, in its own action—to see there a reflection of itself. In the next place, the sensuous ideas, as functions of outward objects, represent the marks of other spiritual action which those objects always display. Every finite object of organized matter, as such, with its sensuous idea, has the marks of the life or action of a finite spirit, animal or vegetable, inhabiting it; for in the organic object there is life, or something living, and whatever lives is spirit. Inorganic matter, constituting artificial objects, bears also marks of the action of finite spirit. But all natural or inartificial inorganic matter, as such, and as an infinite whole, by means of its corresponding body of sensuous ideas, presents a system of spiritual action manifested by uniformities of motion and of forces, all indicating unity of design, and all exactly analogous to the action of a finite spirit, except in

their perfection and infinity — which indicate their author to be a spirit of superhuman or infinite power — operating, therefore, immediately on matter, expressing in it his thought in and by his acts, and needing, therefore, no finite instrumentalities of thought or outward action, like man's sensuous ideas, or language, or body. This one infinite and designing or personal spirit man calls God.

Thus the individual speculative action of man, by means of the sensuous ideas as perfect instruments of thought, leads him to a knowledge of the action of God; which he sees to be as infinite, at once speculative and practical, and to constitute the highest uniformities or principles in Nature; being, as such, when viewed as addressed to man, the Law or Word of God, expressing His character and His providence. This knowledge is obtained by man independently of human language; so that, although human language is necessary for the communication of man's thought to man, it is not necessary in the communion of man with God. For this communion the sensuous ideas suffice, being common to all men, the learned and the unlearned. This fact — showing that by means of the sensuous ideas men may reach the highest principles without having the language to express them — will explain several interesting phenomena: as, the "speaking with tongues," mentioned in the New Testament, the mystic communion of unlearned men with God in revivals of religion, the wonders performed by unlettered genius in invention and in action, and occasionally the noble conduct of a whole nation according to the loftiest and purest principles.

In this way the Semitic or Divine Philosophy, by showing that all men, even without the culture acquired through artificial language, have in the sensuous ideas, as perfect instruments of thought, the means to attain the highest principles of speculative and of practical action, inspires the hope that, with the advantage of the moderate degree of such culture afforded by public education, the attainment of those principles and a corresponding individual and social conduct may in the future be confidently expected in the whole body of the common people. But the consideration of man's joint or social action must be reserved for another occasion.

PHILIP C. FRIESE.

BALTIMORE, MD., May, 1878.

PROFESSOR DR. OTTO PFLEIDERER, of the University of Berlin, will publish, the coming autumn, a new work on the Philosophy of Religion, in which he will take strong ground in favor of the Speculative view, as opposed to the Empiricism and Scepticism now prevalent.